We begin 2022 navigating a fourth Covid surge. Fortunately, two years’ experience battling Covid-19 has prepared us for current conditions. I want to thank Immediate Past Chief of Staff Dr. Brian Boyd for his unflappable leadership throughout his 2020-2021 term, navigating uncharted and difficult territory.

Unfortunately, Omicron is causing an overwhelming ED volume and a bed crisis, so we’ve had to re-institute a review of surgeries and “non-essential” services requiring inpatient beds, the ICU and/or blood products. We have also resumed required testing for Covid prior to aerosolized procedures and surgeries. Patients who are unable to test in the community may have testing done on the day prior to and up to three days before their procedure by utilizing our valet service in the ED circle, or may be dropped off. Registration and pre-procedural testing is in the old cancer center adjacent to our Emergency Care Center.

As an intensivist and Medical Staff leader, I am acutely aware of the ravages this disease has wrought on patients as well as medical and hospital staff. Adversity has also given rise to unprecedented teamwork, perseverance, ingenuity, and a newfound appreciation for well-being. I look forward to working with you in these challenging times.

Orange County Medical Association (OCMA) honors the Physicians of Excellence for their services to their profession, lifelong dedication to their patients and commitment to the community they serve. Each year in January, Orange Coast Magazine, in conjunction with the OCMA, publishes its list of Orange County Physicians of Excellence. In 2022, 100 St. Joseph Hospital Medical Staff members were recognized.
St. Joseph Hospital has become Providence’s first Orange County hospital to go live with its 24/7 Patient Placement Center (PPC). The goal of the PPC is to provide better care for our patients, make high-acuity transfers easier for physicians, and enable physicians to more seamlessly access services available within the PSJH network.

With one call, the Providence Patient Placement Center provides access to 11 Providence hospitals in the LA and Orange County areas. As part of the SJO team’s preparation for the PPC go-live, extensive interviews were conducted with ministry leaders to understand existing transfer protocols, pain points and best practices. Based in the Irvine Regional Office, it is staffed by RNs, case managers, LVN/social workers and financial review professionals.

The PPC uses the ED on-call schedule to facilitate communication with the specialist/hospitalist for consult and/or admission, taking this burden as well as authorization from insurance off SJO caregivers. The PPC will manage:

- Inbound/outbound transfer processes from end-to-end. Inbound includes requests from all acute care facilities, medical groups and urgent care centers from the PSJH network and external organizations (excludes Kaiser, post-acute rehab, acute rehab, behavioral health).
- Direct admission from physician offices, clinics, home care, long-term care facilities.

Services provided include:

- Collect basic/essential patient and preliminary clinical information
- Triage calls, identify and connect with appropriate hospital and specialist
- Coordinate physician acceptance
- Collect/completed all necessary details for hospital admission
- Coordinate inpatient bed assignment
- Follow up with referring facility/provider

Physicians, medical directors, case managers, insurance providers and third-party or hospital representatives can initiate transfer/referral. Patients and families must request a referral through their physician or assigned case manager. All calls are recorded. Transportation is managed by the sending hospital.

If you have questions about the PPC, please contact Regional Director of Transfer Center Services Jaya Arawal, MA HSA, at 949-381-4951. To contact the Patient Placement Center call 844-900-XFER (9337) or fax 949-381-4542 or 949-372-3556.